

Complete Jewish Bible

The following is a written summary of our [full-length video review](#) featuring excerpts, discussions of key issues and texts, and lots of pictures, and is part of our [Bible Review series](#).

Do you recommend it? Why?

Two thumbs up! We highly recommend this Bible. Read on to learn why.

Who's this Bible best for?

You'll find the Complete Jewish Bible to be especially useful if you're looking for a Bible that's 100% Messianic Jewish, easy to read, and that will give you a crash course in Hebrew and Judaism.

Would you suggest this as a primary or a secondary Bible? Why?

The CJB is ideal as a primary Bible to carry around and read from on a regular basis.

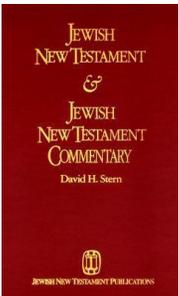
How's this version's relationship with the Jews and Judaism?

This Bible takes a very positive attitude towards the Jewish people, and towards Judaism. From its name as the "Complete *Jewish Bible*", to its overtly Jewish terminology and features, it "challenges both Jews and Christians to see that the whole Bible is Jewish", as is proclaimed in the introduction. (Watch the [video review](#) for more from the intro.)

The recently released Study Bible edition will be especially useful to Christians seeking to understand the Jewish roots of their faith, and Jews seeking to better understand Messianic Judaism. More on that when we talk about the "extras" in this Bible.

The CJB was translated by a highly respected Messianic Jewish scholar. (More on him soon too!) Similarly, the contributors to the notes and articles of the Study Bible edition read like a who's who of Messianic Judaism, featuring leading minds from the UMJC, MJAA, IAMCS, and Tikkun. The CJB not only emerged from the Messianic Jewish world, but is also significantly shaping it, and is widely used in Messianic Jewish congregations. The simple act of reading from it is a celebration of the historic Messianic Jewish move of God in our time!

Who's the publisher and when did it come out?



The pioneer *Jewish New Testament* first came out in 1989, followed by its companion *Jewish New Testament Commentary* in 1992. Both were published by Lederer Messianic Publications.

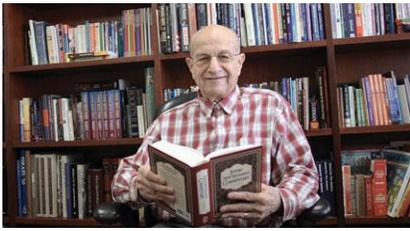
The groundbreaking *Complete Jewish Bible* was released, also by Lederer, to widespread acclaim in 1998.

And then in 2016 the *Complete Jewish Study Bible* was published, featuring an updated translation enhanced with rich notes and a colourful new look, this time by Hendrickson Publishing and edited by Rabbi Barry Rubin.

Who translated it and what's their story?

Dr. David Stern is a highly respected scholar and pioneer in the Messianic Jewish movement. He was born in 1935, came to faith in Yeshua in 1972, and made aliyah (immigrated to Israel) with his wife Martha in 1979. In addition to the *Complete Jewish Bible* and *Jewish New Testament commentary*, Dr. Stern is also the author of the *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, which was first published in 1998 and then republished as *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement with an Ancient Past* in 2007.





Dr. Stern holds degrees from Princeton University and Fuller Theological Seminary, taught at UCLA as a professor, and also taught Fuller's first 'Judaism and Christianity' class. Speaking of Fuller! For a "fuller" bio, and to hear more of the story behind this translation, watch the [video review](#).

Is it more word for word or thought for thought?

The New Testament (or *Brit Hadashah* as it's referred to throughout the Complete Jewish Bible) is Dr. Stern's translation direct from the Greek.

The Tanach is his modern English paraphrase of the Jewish Publication Society's 1917 version, with some alterations based on the original Masoretic texts and comparisons with other translations.

In both cases, the CJB makes for easy reading, and is more of a thought-for-thought "dynamic equivalent" than it is a word-for-word "formal equivalent" translation.

To hear Dr. Stern's own description of his methods of translation, and his explanation for why he simply calls this a "version" rather than a paraphrase or translation, watch the [video review](#).

How are Hebrew personal names written?

One of the distinctives of this version is how personal names in both the Tanach and the New Testament retain their original Hebrew pronunciation.

Examples from the Tanach would include Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov, Rivkah, Moshe, Y'hoshua, Avigayil, Shlomo, and Yesha'yahu.

Examples from the Gospels would include Shimon Kefa, Ya'akov, Yochanan, Y'hudah, Miryam, Elisheva, and Shoshanah. Of special note is Paul, who is always referred to by his Hebrew name Sha'ul, with the exception of Acts 13:9 which reads "then Sha'ul, also known as Paul, filled with the *Ruach HaKodesh*..."

open and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; ¹¹ then a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love; I am well pleased with you."

¹² Immediately the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by the Adversary. He was with the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

¹⁴ After Yochanan had been arrested, Yeshua came into the Galil proclaiming the Good News from God:

¹⁵ "The time has come,
God's Kingdom is near!
Turn to God from your sins
and believe the Good News!"

¹⁶ As he walked beside Lake Kinneret, he saw Shim'on and Andrew, Shim'on's brother, casting a net into the lake; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ Yeshua said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you into fishers for men!" ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ Going on a little farther, he saw Ya'akov Ben-Zavdai and Yochanan, his brother, in their boat, repairing their nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zavdai in the boat with the hired men and went after Yeshua.

²¹ They entered K'far-Nachum, and on *Shabbat* Yeshua went into the synagogue and began teaching. ²² They were amazed at the way he taught, for he did not instruct them like the *Torah*-teachers but as one who had authority himself.

²³ In their synagogue just then was a man with an unclean spirit in him, who shouted, ²⁴ "What do you want with us, Yeshua from Natzeret? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!" ²⁵ But Yeshua rebuked the unclean spirit, "Be quiet and come out of him!" ²⁶ Throwing the man into a convulsion, it gave a loud shriek and came out of him. ²⁷ They were all so astounded that they began asking each other, "What is this? A new teaching, one with authority behind it! He gives orders even to the unclean spirits, and they obey him!" ²⁸ And the news about him spread quickly through the whole region of the Galil.

How are Hebrew place names written?

Similarly, geographical names in both the Tanach and the New Testament retain their original Hebrew pronunciation. What's nifty is that this is what these places continue to be called in modern Hebrew in Israel today!

Examples from the Tanach would include Yerushalayim, Hevron, Beit-Lechem, and Bavel.

Examples from the Gospels would include the Galil, Natzeret, K'far Nachum, Beit-Anyah, Ramatayim, and Shiloach.

How are Hebrew book names written?

The names of the books of the Tanach are written with their original Hebrew pronunciation, with the Anglicized versions of the book names in parentheses. For instance, *B'resheet* (Genesis), *Sh'mot* (Exodus), *Tehillim* (Psalms), and *Mishlei* (Proverbs). If you're unsure how to pronounce these terms or don't understand their meanings but you'd like to learn, do Lesson 16 of [Hebrew Quest](#).

2 Thessalonians.....
Sha'ul's (Paul's) Pastoral Letters (to Individuals)
1 Timothy.....
2 Timothy.....
Titus.....
Philemon.....
General Letters
Messianic Jews (Hebrews).....
Ya'akov (James).....
1 Keja (1 Peter).....
2 Keja (2 Peter).....
1 Yochanan (1 John).....
2 Yochanan (2 John).....
3 Yochanan (3 John).....
Y'hudah (Jude).....
VII. The Revelation of Yeshua the Messiah to Yochanan (John).....

When the books of the New Testament are named after someone with a Hebrew name - for instance, Mattityahu, Ya'akov, or Y'hudah - they're written with the original Hebrew pronunciation of that name. Otherwise they're generally written with their traditional designations - for instance, Romans or Philemon. Exceptions to this generality include Hebrews, which is "Messianic Jews", and also to a lesser degree Acts and Revelation, which are "the Acts of the Emissaries" and "the Revelation of Yeshua the Messiah", respectively.

How are the names and titles of God written?

In the Tanach, God's name is circumlocuted as "ADONAI", which literally means "my Master" or "my Lord". For an in-depth discussion of the background to this tradition, and other related topics such as the history of the hybrid term *Jehovah* and the problem of how in the New Testament the Greek term *Kurios* can mean sir, Master, or ADONAI depending on context, watch the [video review](#).

Elohim is rendered as God, *Adonai Yhwh* as ADONAI God, *Adonai* as Adonai, *El Shaddai* as El Shaddai [God Almighty], *El Elyon* as El Elyon, *El Kana* as Jealous God, and *Yhwh Tzvaot* as Adonai Tzva'ot.

In the Gospels, *Iesous* is rendered as Yeshua, *Kurios* as the Lord, and *Christos* as Messiah.

The Holy Spirit is called the *Ruach HaKodesh*.

How are key terms in the Tanach rendered?

Because this is a Jewish Bible that assumes you're either familiar with popular Hebrew words or up for learning them, many of these key Hebrew words are transliterated rather than translated. Also, because this is more of a paraphrase, original words aren't consistently translated into the same English word.

With that disclaimer, *acharit ha'yamim* is phrased as *acharit-hayamim*, *chag* as festival, *chesed* as grace or love, *chukah* as regulation, *chukat olam* as permanent regulation, *emet* as truth or faithfulness, *emunah* as trustworthy in Deuteronomy 32:4 and trusting faithfulness in Habakkuk 2:4; *goyim* as Goyim, *hasatan* as the Adversary, *kadosh kadosh kadosh* as "more holy than the holiest holiness" in Isaiah 6:3, *kodeshim* as the holy people, *kodesh ha'kodeshim* as "the Especially Holy Place", *matzot* as matzah, *mikra kodesh* as holy convocation, *mishpat* as just or rulings, *mitzvah* as mitzvah, *mo'ed* as seasons in Genesis 1:14 and designated times in Leviticus 23:2; *pesach* as Pesach, *shabbaton* as complete rest, *sheol* as the grave, *sukkot* as Sukkot, *teruah* as blasts of the shofar, *torah* is translated as teaching, *totafot* as "at the front of a headband", *tzedakah* as right, *tzitzit* as tzitzit, *yom kippur* as Yom-Kippur, and *kippod* as hedgehog.



How are key terms in the New Testament rendered?

"Abide in me" is phrased as "stay united with me", *Alpha and omega* as 'A' and 'Z' in the original, and 'Alef' and 'Tav' in the updated text, antichrist as anti-Messiah, apostle as emissary, Baptist as Immerser, bind and loose as "prohibit and permit", *baptizo* as immerse, Christian as Messianic, cross as stake or execution-stake, crucify as "nail up" or "put to death as a criminal", disciple as *talmid*, *ekklesia* as Community in Matthew 16:18, congregation in Matthew 18:17, and "Messianic community" in most other instances; *ethnos* as *Goyim* in Matthew 5:47, pagans in Matthew 6:32, and Gentiles in Matthew 12:18; faith as "trusting faithfulness", feast of Dedication as *Hanukkah*, Jews as Judeans when referring to the Jews of that province, justify as "count righteous", *kraspidon* as *tzitzit*, sect of the Nazarenes as "Natratim" and Jesus the Nazarene as "Yeshua from Natzeret", Pentecost as *Shavu'ot*, sanctify as "set apart for God", scribes as Torah scholars, phylacteries as *t'fillin*, *paraclete* as Counselor in John 14:16 and "who pleads our cause" in 1 John 2:1; peace as *shalom*, priests as *kohanim*, propitiation as *kapparah*, righteous as *tzaddik*, Sabbath as *Shabbat*, and saints as holy people, God's people, or believers.

Other Hebraisms germane to this translation include common people as *am ha'arets*, Barabbas as *Bar-Abba*, voice from heaven as *bat kol*, Boanerges as *Bnei Regesh*, blessing as *brachah*, circumcision as *brit milah*, teaching as *drash*, paradise as *Gen-Eden*, hymn in Matthew 26:30 as *the Hallel*, great day of the feast in John 7:37 as *Hoshana Rabbah*, Sea of Galilee as *Kinneret*, bastard as *mamzer*, middle wall of partition as *m'chitzah*, lamp as *menorah*, washing as *mikveh*, hour of prayer as *minchah*, insane as *meshugga*, first day of the week in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 as *motza'ei Shabbat*, ritual handwashing as *n'tilat yadayim*, world to come as

olam haba, Pharisees as *P'rushim*, New Moon as *Rosh Hodesh*, Passover meal as *Seder*, peace to you as *shalom aleikhem*, question as *sh'eilah*, God's presence or glory as *Sh'khinah*, authority as *s'mikhah*, Scriptures as *Tanakh*, Saducees as *Tz'dukim*, and jubilee as *yovel*.

Scared to read the CJB out loud because you don't know how to say these Hebrew words right? Learn how in part two of the [video review](#).

How are key verses in the New Testament interpreted?

Watch part two of the [video review](#) for an in-depth discussion on how the writings of Paul regarding the Torah are interpreted, and to hear how some of the most popular verses in the New Testament are phrased.

Is this the Tanach, the New Testament, or both?

The *Complete Jewish Bible* and the *Complete Jewish Study Bible* feature both the Tanach and the New Testament. Notably, there are no "Old Testament" and "New Testament" pages. Watch the [video review](#) to learn why.

As for the *Jewish New Testament*, it features only the New Testament - surprise!

Does it also have the Hebrew text?

This is a translation only, and doesn't include the original Hebrew text - although with the number of transliterated Hebrew words you might forget if you're reading Hebrew or English.

Does it open from right to left, or from left to right?

The CJB opens and reads from left to right, like a regular English book.

Are the books in the Jewish or Christian order?

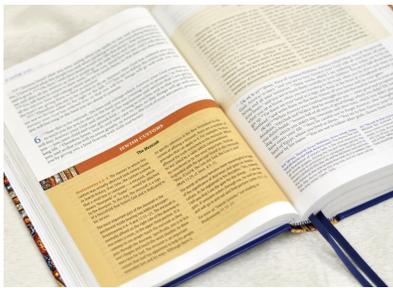
The books are in the traditional Jewish order, as are the chapters and verses. Watch the [video review](#) for a detailed explanation of the differences between Jewish and Christian Bibles.

How's the general layout and navigability?

The layout in the *Complete Jewish Bible* and *Complete Jewish New Testament* is relatively basic. One column of text, with the book titles written at the top of the page in both transliterated Hebrew and traditional English forms, and page numbers on the bottom of the page.

The text is amply spaced and the font is eye-friendly, contributing to the easy readability of this translation.

Transliterated Hebrew words are *italicized* so you can see them coming and psychologically prepare to try to pronounce them right, thus helping you stay in *shalom*.



One notable distinction of this Bible is how poetry is treated. Dr. Stern points out in his introduction that approximately 30% of the Bible is written as poetry. Accordingly, these sections are laid out line by line rather than as a block of text on the page.

The *Complete Jewish Study Bible* has a similar layout, but is considerably more colourful and of course includes the extra goodies listed above.

What does it have for notes, appendices, and extras?

The extras in this Bible are such a rich educational experience we'd urge you to get a copy, just to read them!

In the introduction to the *Complete Jewish Bible* you'll find the story of how it came to be, Dr. Stern's thoughts on translations, an explanation of the differences between Jewish and Christian Bibles, a brilliant portrayal of how the CJB expresses the Jewishness of the New Testament, a list of the prophecies that Yeshua fulfills, a guide to using the CJB in synagogue services, and discussions on the name of God, interpretations of controversial texts, and an overview of the history, source texts, major themes, and divine validity of the Bible.

At the back of the book you'll find a glossary explaining how to pronounce every Hebrew name used in this Bible (no, unfortunately Hazelelponi isn't pronounced "has a little pony"), along with short explanations of every Hebrew term used. You'll also find a handy list of the traditional Scripture readings for Shabbats, festivals, and fasts. And then finally there are some maps, so that instead of saying "from Genesis to Revelation" you can say "from Genesis to Maps".

GENESIS

Parashah 1: B'resheet (In the beginning) 1:1-6:8

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was unformed and void, darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. So there was evening, and there was morning, one day.

2 God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the water; let it divide the water from the water above the dome; that is how it was," and God called the dome Sky. So there was evening, and there was morning, a second day.

3 God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let dry land appear," and that is how it was. God called the dry land Earth, the gathering together of the water he called Seas, and God saw that it was good.

4 God said, "Let the earth put forth grass, seed-producing plants, and fruit trees, each yielding its own kind of seed-bearing fruit, on the earth"; and that is how it was. The earth brought forth grass, plants each yielding its own kind of seed, and trees each producing its own kind of seed-bearing fruit, and God saw that it was good.

5 So there was evening, and there was morning, a third day.

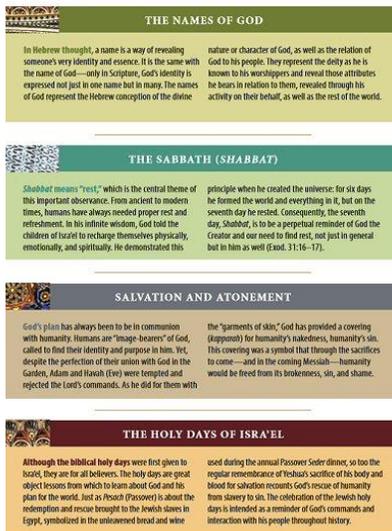
(A: B) God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to divide the day from the night; let them be for signs, seasons, days and years," and let them be for lights in the dome of the sky to give light to the earth"; and that is how it was. God made the two great lights—the larger light to rule the day and the smaller light to rule the night—and the stars. God put them in the dome of the sky to give light to the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. So there was evening, and there was morning, a fourth day.

6 God said, "Let the water swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open dome of the sky." God created the great sea creatures and every living thing that creeps, so that the water swarmed with all kinds of them, and there was every kind of winged bird; and God saw that it was good. Then God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the water of the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." So there was evening, and there was morning, a fifth day.

(A: B) God said, "Let the earth bring forth each kind of living creature—each kind of livestock, crawling animal and wild beast"; and that is how it was.

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And that's just the Complete Jewish Bible. The Complete Jewish *Study* Bible has this, and soooo much more. Like seriously, just buy it. There are one-page introductions to each book of Scripture, and tons of study notes at the bottom of almost every page. It's studded with 34 topical articles on subjects ranging from Jewish views on Satan and hell, to the Jewish *Siddur*, to a look at Millennialism and the Future of Israel. It's also bespangled with 117 - yes, 117! - thematic articles on the subjects of Anti-Jewish interpretations of Scripture, covenants, Jewish customs, Jewish-Gentile relations, Messianic prophecy, the names of God, Sabbath, salvation and atonement, the holy days of Israel, the land of Israel, Torah, and the tabernacle. And finally, there's a list of 43 of the greatest Rabbis and Sages in Jewish history, with short biographies on each one. And colour maps.

How would you summarize the positives and negatives of this Bible?

The positives of this version are too many to enumerate here! As mentioned at the beginning of this review, this Bible is both 100% Jewish, and 100% Messianic. Every effort has been made to highlight the Jewishness of the whole Bible, especially the New Testament. In contrast with centuries of Christian ambivalence towards the Jewish context of the Scriptures, this is a giant step for churchkind.

Like gas to the flames, the CJB is also widely available, and in a variety of formats. For many Christians their contact with Messianic Judaism started when they noticed this version on the shelf at their local Christian bookstore, or on their favourite Bible app. In this regard the Complete Jewish Bible is changing the faces of both Christianity and Messianic Judaism, and is truly historic.

We don't have any strong negatives to report, although several of its pros could be taken as cons, depending on what you're looking for. For instance, the fact that this version is easy to read also means it's not as literal, which may not be as conducive to in-depth study.

Speaking of easy reading, if Hebrew is all Greek to you, you may find the Hebrew spattered across every page very *not* easy to read. Like really, Habaziniyah and Meshelemiah were hard enough to read, never mind *Havatzinyah* and *Meshelemiyahu*. Having to slog through hundreds of words that you have no idea how to pronounce may not help get you excited about your Jewish roots, or feel so edifying to your spirit. This could be an especially negative experience if you're asked to read this version in public. It is true that there are useful pronounciatory guides at the front and back of this Bible, and you could do [Hebrew Quest](#) with us which would help. But the over-the-top Hebrew in this version still makes it less than "seeker-sensitive" unless you're coming from a fluent Jewish background, or are an avid Hebrew learner.

On a related note, while generally the CJB's system for transliterating Hebrew words into English is a nice

balance between precise accuracy and intuitive user-friendliness, there are two instances in which a compromise was made on one side or the other that you may appreciate being aware of.

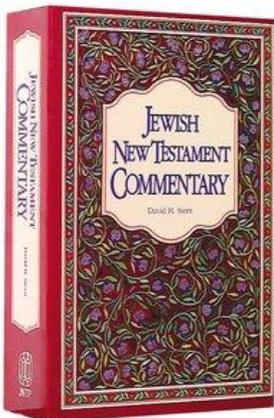
On the side of extreme precision, the apostrophe (') is used to denote the *sh'va* and *aleph* sounds - for instance Israel is Isra'el and Judah is Y'hudah - while the reverse apostrophe (`) is used to denote the *ayin* sound in names such as Ya`akov aka Jacob. This contrast can be seen rather sharply in verses such as Genesis 46:2, which reads "In a vision at night God called to Isra'el, "Ya`akov! Ya`akov!" While there is precedent for this distinction in older transliteratory systems such as Koren's, it's somewhat misleading. While *aleph* and *ayin* were pronounced differently thousands of years ago, today these two letters are pronounced the same way. Not to mention the reverse apostrophe is really annoying if you're copy and pasting verses from an electronic version of the CJB because it looks crazy, like it's going to fly off the page. Nobody uses reverse apos`trophes in normal En`glish, you know?

On the other side of extreme user-friendliness, when the letter *chet* - you know that scratchy horky sound - occurs in the middle of a word it's transliterated as "ch", whereas on the front of a word it's just written as "h". Dr. Stern does acknowledge this exception in the pronunciation guide, that "the reader can't determine whether a Hebrew name starts with hei or chet", but then explains with a note of humour "this seems a small price to pay for assuring that no one will say that the Jewish wedding canopy (hupah) is a "tchoopah" or call the city of Hevron (Hebron) by the name of a gas station ("Chevron")."

Finally, of anecdotal note, Dr. Stern included a handful of Yiddish words in his original translation, which apparently aroused sufficient grunts of disgruntlement from his "fans" that they were excised from the updated text.

Which formats can I get it in, and where?

This version is so widely available that we have christened a new word, *jewbiquitous*, in its honour. *Ubiquitous* means "present, appearing, or found everywhere". *JEWbiquitous* means "a Jewish item or idea found everywhere, e.g. the Complete Jewish Bible".



For a hard copy, order the [Complete Jewish Bible](#) or even better the [Complete Jewish Study Bible](#). There's also the shorter [Jewish New Testament](#).

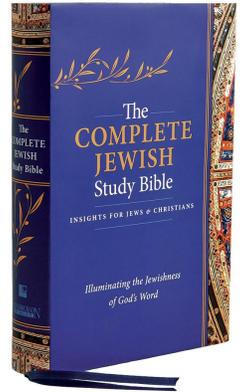
Of special mention is the [Jewish New Testament Commentary](#) which comes with our highest recommendations.

The Complete Jewish Bible is also available over a wide range of digital platforms! Get it on the free [e-Sword](#) Bible software (and be sure to watch our [e-Sword Course](#)), and also on [Logos](#), [theWord](#), and [Olive Tree](#). You can also read the CJB on your [Kindle](#), get it for your Android device on [Google Play](#), and get it for your [Apple Device](#).

If funds are tight the Complete Jewish Bible can also be read for free online at biblegateway.com and bible.com.

And if you're an active type, more of an auditory learner, or want to hear how to pronounce all those Hebrew names right, get the [Jewish New Testament on mp3](#).

We also recommend Dr. Stern's book [Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement with an Ancient Past](#), or the condensed version [Restoring the Jewishness of the Gospel: A Message for Christians](#)



We hope this review was helpful! Be sure to also watch the [video review](#), check out our [Bible Review series](#), and [become a member](#).